



RAINBOW TROUT
Salmo gairdneri

—From a painting by Charles Bradford Hudson, 1910

RAINBOW TROUT

Salmo gairdnerii



DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

The black spots vary in size from pin points up to about one-eighth inch in diameter, but are rarely large or perfectly round. They are usually found on the upper half of the head, on the upper half of the body, and on the dorsal and caudal fins.

The lateral band is usually conspicuous, reddish to violet, extending from the head to the caudal fin. The lower side of the head is commonly reddish.

There are no "cutthroat" dashes of red on the membrane beneath the jaw in typical rainbow, although some rainbow in some areas may show small orange marks similar to those of a cutthroat.

There are no small red spots on the sides, nor wavy marks or bars on the back or dorsal fin.

All trout vary somewhat in their coloration, but the rainbow are extremely variable. Rainbow in some lakes and reservoirs may be quite silvery except on the back; they may have very few spots and these may be indistinct, and the red on the head and sides may be completely lacking.

The rainbow trout illustrated above could be a yearling or a two year old fish and represents an average sized trout of this species. In older, larger rainbows the body proportions may be somewhat different, particularly in the older males, in which the lower jaw is much more prominent.

DISTRIBUTION IN CALIFORNIA

The rainbow trout is widely scattered over California. It originally occurred in a large part of the trout streams of the State and in a few lakes. Since this is the fish most commonly raised in the trout hatcheries of California, it has been planted in nearly every lake and stream which is suitable

for trout. Therefore, it is by far the most widely distributed trout in California.

In many coastal streams this species is represented by the migratory steelhead in the lower portions and by resident fish in the headwaters. In some streams the ranges of the two overlap. Rainbows of one subspecies will hybridize with other subspecies and with cutthroat trout when their ranges are not separated by some barrier.

INTERESTING FACTS

Resident rainbow rarely attain a large size in California. Steelhead rainbow grow much larger because they migrate to the ocean and spend one or more years under conditions much more favorable to rapid growth than are found in fresh water. However, in a few of the larger reservoirs and lakes in California rainbow do grow rapidly and one weighing 18 pounds was recorded from Lake Almanor.



The Sacramento River near Castella, Shasta County, showing Mt. Shasta in the distance. This is one of the best rainbow trout streams in California.